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KAUAI NEWS

Lt. Gov Aiona provides funding check to County

By Tom Finnegan - The Garden Island

LIHU'E -- Lieutenant Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr., presented Kaua'i Mayor Bryan J. Baptiste with a oversized symbolic check for \$560,000 yesterday, to help pay for an adolescent treatment facility in Hanapepe.

To get the real check, however, the county must come up with a matching amount through combination of private donations and county funds over the coming months. The total project cost is approximately \$1.1 million.

The mayor, in a press conference at the state building, said that with the funding, the plans for the new 16-bed adolescent center will go ahead, and that construction is set to begin in February.

"We will continue to look for more private donors before going to the County Council for the balance. The Council said they will be supportive," said Mayor Baptiste. "Kudos to the Legislators and to the Governor.

State Senator Gary Hooser, as well as Representatives Mina Morita and Ezra Kanoho were in the audience to see the presentation. Former Kaua'i mayor Maryanne Kusaka, who is challenging Hooser in the 2004 election, and former Kaua'i Chamber of Commerce president Mamo Cummings, who is running against North Kaua'i State Representative Mina Morita, were also in the audience.

"It was almost like 'Field of Dreams,'" Baptiste said, "'If you build it, we will come.'"

And private donations have stepped up, as well as non-profit programs willing to run the adolescent program, the mayor said.

To date, the county has collected \$50,000 in private donations, and a scholarship program for those unable to pay for the treatment has been started with a pledge of \$100,000 per year.

The new adolescent treatment facility will be located on approximately 1.2 acres of state land that had previously been used by the county to operate the old Hanapepe Humane Society.

In anticipation of the residential treatment facility being built, Governor Lingle signed an executive order in April of this year to change the designated use of the property.

Plans call for two existing buildings on the property to be renovated for administrative office space, meeting rooms, a kitchen and storage.

Two county-owned portable buildings, currently used by the prosecutor's office,



and each approximately 1,500 square-feet, will be transported to the site and renovated into eight-bed units, for a total of 16 beds. A third portable building will be used for common areas.

The new facility is expected to be self-sustaining based on patient revenues, including self-pay patients and payments made by insurance companies as well as state and federal agencies for substance abuse services, the mayor said.

County Anti-drug Planning Coordinator Roy Nishida said that the facility will treat 10-151452f the total need for the county.

"We don't have any silver bullet, any quick fix to the (drug) problem," said Aiona. "The residential treatment facility will enable youth to remain on the island to receive effective drug treatment services... and be closer to their families.

"We are trying aggressively to get treatment programs on the neighbor islands.

There is a need out there and we know it," said Aiona. "The problem is funding and we are trying to work it out."

There are only two in-patients treatment centers for adolescents in the state, he added.

This new facility will fill a long overdue need to provide treatment on Kaua'i for adolescents with substance abuse problems," he added.

Mayor Baptiste noted that since Hurricane Iniki in 1992, Kaua'i has had no residential treatment facility of any kind, leaving residents to rely on outpatient services or facilities on other islands and the mainland.

"This is the first step to help resolve the drug problem," Nishida said.

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